

The Peasant at Work

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acres a day with a tractor. "Before the war," he went on to say, "a peasant who tried something new was considered an amusing person with a loose screw in his head. Even the agriculturists were received with 'what have those educated people got to tell us who have callouses from working?' Also, the agriculturist has learned more about agriculture and more about people, changing for the better."

The director's wife agreed with what we had learned from Alekos about the effect of mechanization upon woman's work. She did point out that machine harvesting and threshing had relieved the housewife of an old burden of feeding many people for long periods of time when the work was done by hand. However, the women still plant tobacco and cultivate cotton. Men are helping out a little more, but this hard field work in Thessaly is still a woman's job. Here again there is some compensation for the women. Although they have as much work now as before, they have more money. They will change into better dresses in the evening and go for a walk on a weekday, something much less common before the last war. Finally, the director's wife pointed out, those families who own twenty to twenty-five acres of land have acquired ease and prosperity and are becoming a well-to-do peasantry.

Elsewhere around Larissa we inquired about the spread of mechanization. The tractor dealers in the town put Alekos' problems in a somewhat different light. We learned, for example, that a 46-horsepower tractor, with starter and pneumatic tire wheels, cost 55,000 drachmas (\$3,667); the purchaser had to pay 40 percent in cash and could sign a bill for the remaining 60 percent, payable after 18 months to the Bank of Greece at the rate of 16 percent interest. Dealers and some of the local government officials considered this rate most oppressive.

A second problem was that of spare parts, most of which had to be imported. Foreign-exchange difficulties and import restrictions make this difficult; when the parts were not available, the owner of the tractor was greatly inconvenienced, to put it mildly. We got some idea of the problem of spare parts when we learned that there were 25 dealers of tractors of different makes in Larissa alone. The dealers attempted to teach the purchasers how to use the machine and, a year or so before, the government had set up traveling schools which instructed in the operation and care of the tractor and afterwards gave examinations for licenses. That year, out of 1,200 farm workers examined, only 700 were given a license.

Dealers also indicated that the buyer of a tractor usually ordered a plow and a disk-harrow, with many requesting grain drills. This equipment adds greatly to the total cost. Most of the tractors were bought by individuals or by a group of three to five peasants, with only twenty to twenty-five tractors belonging to cooperatives.

In the tractor land of Larissa everything seems fine now. As in the case

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tives who approach him than he would to others. A Greek who has gone to the United States will send money first to his own parents for their use or for the use of his younger brothers and sisters; then, if he has enough, he may give some to his poorer relatives — who are usually not backward about making their needs known. In some villages the rich men who give generously to their relatives are said to do so in the hope that more people will light candles for them. Kinship and matters related to it are discussed a great deal by village folk, a testimony to its interest and importance in their lives. What varies most of all throughout the country is the extent to which Western and urban ideas have penetrated to the point that individuals think primarily of their own immediate family and only secondarily — and perhaps only a little — about the larger family connection of which they are a part. Nevertheless, throughout the country, among all types of villagers, the family is still the basic unit; the father is supposedly "the head of the house"; and children "know their place."

One of the most straightforward characterizations of Greek family life I heard came not from a social worker, a home economist, or a political leader who knew the villagers well; it came from a bright but uneducated peasant girl who was asked to tell about the family life in her village in the northern Peloponnesos:

The immediate family consists of the father and mother, and the children and parents of the family heads. There are usually no other relatives living in the house.

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The duties of the man: his highest duty is to provide a dowry for his daughters; send sons to school; enlarge the house; add to the fields.

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The duties of the wife: to have children and look after them; to look after her husband (have him clean, feed him, be obedient to him); clean the house; do all the work and see that the boys are good workers; start weaving and embroidery for the daughters' dowry; work in the field; respect older people; see that religious ceremonies are observed in the home. The duties of the mother are severe, for the father is out all the time — during the day he works and in the evening he is in the coffeehouse.

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The duties of children: to be good at school; at home obedient (although they seldom are); respect older people; work during part of leisure time, not because their work is needed but because they should get used to working.

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The duties of old people: to look after the little children, take them away to give the wife some quiet; tell stories to the children; and otherwise do what they like. When sons and daughters marry, the old people expect the young folks to take over and let them rest.

This thumbnail sketch of Greek family life provides a general outline into which hundreds of colorful details can be fitted. Many of these revolve about the role of the woman in the home and her relationship with her husband and children.

The Family: Economic Activities

594 THE STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES of the family as the most significant social unit in Vasilika will become clearer in the ensuing discussions. For the present, the family in the village may be defined as what has variously been called the "elementary," "nuclear," or "conjugal" family; that is, a husband and wife and their children. It is the welfare of his own family as a corporate entity which motivates the actions of the villager; and the family is the group whose members work in cooperation to try to maintain or to improve their common position. The villagers measure prestige and honor by the degree to which a family succeeds in fulfilling its obligations. From their point of view, the essential family obligation is to maintain a ratio between property and children such as to enable each child, when the property is divided in equal shares among all the children, to maintain, in turn, a decent standard of living for his family. This goal commonly requires not only an effort to conserve the wealth received from previous generations, but also, if possible, to increase it. The villagers act as if they conceive of the family as a kin group which conserves, accumulates, and transmits wealth from one generation to the next. The ability to transmit wealth is especially important. The villagers consider a man who is rich in lands but has no children an object of pity; the man's wife is considered even more unfortunate. This is because the contemplation of the success of their children gives the life of a married couple a large part of its meaning. In the operation of the inheritance and dowry systems in the region, a son may be given his share of the patrimony in the form of an education and a daughter given hers as her dowry at marriage. An educated son who has a civil service job in a town, or a daughter whose dowry was large enough for her parents to have found a schoolteacher husband for her, can give to the parents lasting inner satisfaction and the joy of being able to tell of their child's exploits. To be able to sit and watch such adult children, or even an industrious farming son, as they talk to visitors of their adventures, or as, on a feast day, they eat the food their

28 THE FAMILY: ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

249 night. In October, the dried tobacco is pressed into bales by machines the
[221] farmers have for the purpose, and is then ready for sale.
407 A farmer can get 720 *okadbes* of tobacco from 6 *stremata* of land, and
433 if he succeeds in selling the entire crop at 30 drachmas an *oka*, he receives the
434 equivalent of \$720. This is a very good income, indeed, especially when it is
added to that derived from cotton.

471 Vasilika farmers are obviously in need of some capitalization to finance
241 what have become considerable investments necessary for producing their wheat,
454 cotton, and tobacco. Whether or not the farmers' savings would be adequate to
652 finance their crops, the fact is that Vasilika farmers do not want to use their
[583] accumulated savings to invest in their own farms. Cash drachma savings are
[556] exchanged for gold English sovereigns or French or Italian specie, which ac-
cumulations are then set aside for the dowries of the girls of the family or to
pay for the education of a son. The only notable exception to this use of savings
is that the farmer who becomes wealthy enough to feel that his obligations to his
children are taken care of may buy land if the opportunity presents itself. At
the same time that the farmer does not want to spend savings on the current pro-
duction of his crops, he is eager for an increased cash income to secure the future
of his children. Increased cash income is possible only through investment in
his farm. How does he get out of the dilemma? He willingly accepts credit from
[242] the Agricultural Bank of Greece. In addition, farmers accept from the bank the
needed seed, artificial fertilizers, and chemical weed killers and insect sprays.
March is the month in which the loans are made by the bank, so that the farmers
always receive their money before Easter. Both the manager of the Agricultural
Bank in Levadhia and we were aware of the fact that some of the money was
used for Easter finery and Easter feasting. We had the impression that the
farmers considered the loan as cash income to be spent as they wished. The re-
payments of principle and interest due in October were viewed by the farmers
as something like an additional expense or tax chargeable against current income
from the produce, and in this sense, not as expenditure of savings.

Miscellaneous Crops

244 Each household maintains a small kitchen garden near the cotton fields.
This location permits the farmers to irrigate and to tend to the garden at the
[462] same time they work with the cotton. Both men and women work in the gardens
to raise tomatoes, eggplant, cucumbers, squash, and melons of various kinds,
but only to the extent necessary for immediate consumption by the household
[433] and its hired farm labor through the growing season. No effort is made to
produce surplus for canning or for any other kind of home processing. Besides
the summer vegetable gardens, in the early spring, the women of a few house-
holds fence off a rectangular area near the houses and plant spring onions,
[417] lettuce, spinach, and a type of lima bean called *kukya*. The wire or reed fence

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into thread at home by the women. In each household the women weave the rugs that are a necessary part of a girl's trousseau with wool from their own sheep— at least as long as it lasts.

Goats are raised for their meat and, in households with young children, for their milk. Adults rarely drink the liquid milk. As a form of pasteurization, the villagers always bring the milk to a boil before serving it, and the children drink the milk while it is still warm. In the more prosperous households, the women use both sheep's and goat's milk as an ingredient for a kind of milk and egg custard pie and for a sweet milk and rice dish served with sugar and cinnamon. But these foods are in a class of special treats and are served mostly in spring and early summer when the milk supply is at its height. Goat meat, however, is often a less elegant substitute for lamb on special occasions. Kids are raised for the Christmas feast, and the measure of the success of a household's participation in the village's *paniyiri* (patron saints' day festival) is expressed by the number of animals (goats and sheep) slaughtered for the feast. The more visitors to the house, the more enjoyable the day is felt to be; the more visitors, of course, the more meat is eaten. When asked whether the *paniyiri* had been successful this year, one farmer answered, "Oh yes; we slaughtered three!"

Chickens are also an additional source of food and sometimes of income for the villagers. Families keep about a dozen fowl. They roam the house yards, (there is an effort made to keep them off the village street, and all hands join in shooing them out of the houses), and roost at night in the stone stables or in the ground-floor storeroom of the houses. The villagers like eggs, and eat them in various ways, but their production is also, of course, seasonal. The chicken is most significant for the part it plays in Greek village hospitality. The villagers will say, "Come to our house for a proper meal (*trapezi*). We'll kill a chicken for you." And that is quite literally what they do. Occasionally enough chicks survive to create a surplus from the household's point of view. Such poultry is sold to buyers who come around from the nearby towns. Chickens are rarely considered an extra source of food for ordinary household consumption.

A watchdog is a common addition to a household's collection of farm animals. The people of Vasilika believe that thievery is a constant danger to be guarded against and prefer, if possible, not to leave their household compounds totally unguarded. Whenever possible, some member of the household stays around the property even if it means sacrificing a visit to a feast at a neighboring village. If all the members of a household are out working in the fields, a dog is left at home. Ordinarily, however, dogs are tied up all day and the farmer, just before he goes to sleep, frees the dog to stand vigil through the night. Dogs are trained to bark at any unusual noise or at the approach of any person who is not a member of the household. The villagers, especially the women, are very much afraid of the dogs and consequently avoid going out at night. On one occasion, when the women and girls of the village had sat together in the church until long after dark, they set out for home with groups of neighbors clustered together, holding on to each other, walking fast, and shuddering and exclaiming with fear at the clamor made by the dogs. It should be added that in actuality, there are few thieves in the village and that the dogs rarely bite anyone.

SPECIALIZATION OF LABOR . 37

fifties remember a childhood in which wheat was the major crop, with some corn, chick peas, and lentils as a supplement. Only a small amount of cotton was raised. Each household owned more sheep, horses, and mules than the present villagers. The animal dung fertilized the fields, some fields were permitted to lie fallow each year, and whatever cash income there was came from the sale of surplus wheat and small quantities of cotton, wool, and milk. The farmers all agree that one householder, working alone with occasional hired help, derives more income from his patrimony of 35 *stremata* than his father gained from 180 *stremata* worked with the help of several sons.

The increased mechanization on the farms of Vasilika and the more extended and intensive cultivation of cotton and tobacco have unquestionably increased the cash income of the villagers. The same conditions have led to increased indebtedness and a greater dependence on world markets.

Every household in Vasilika has accepted the new techniques and has been affected to a greater or lesser extent by the consequences. Whatever differences exist in methods of cultivation are dictated by the differences in immediate practical possibilities and necessities in each household, and there is no consistent pattern from this point of view which distinguishes one group of Vasilika households from another. From the standpoint of agricultural techniques, there is neither a progressive faction nor a conservative faction in Vasilika.

The uniformity of acceptance of change has been possible in Vasilika, I believe, because all the villagers, farmers and shepherds alike, work for the same goal: the enhancement of the honor and prestige of the family. One important culturally approved means of achieving the goal is the upward mobility of family members. But upward mobility rests partly, at least, on an improved material standard of living. Any change which enables a village family to increase its material wealth is, therefore, welcomed after a consciously empirical assessment of its effectiveness.

One of the methods by which a family can express its social position in Vasilika and its aspirations toward mobility is by the way it uses its income. The next chapter will discuss, therefore, some of the consumption habits of the villagers.

The Family: Consumption Habits

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[454] INCREASED INCOME resulting from technological advances in Vasilika has given the present generation in the village a wider choice of alternatives for allotting their resources than that enjoyed by their predecessors. The first call upon the family's income, after the needs of subsistence, is felt to be the accumulation of a dowry for the daughters and (since there is rarely land enough for all) the provision of an education or apprentice-training for all the sons except the one or two who could eventually be provided with enough land to farm profitably. The process by which these obligations are fulfilled is the subject of the next chapter. Here, our concern is with the goods and services used by the villagers, with particular emphasis on the overtones of meaning that accompany them.

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556 The differences among the households of Vasilika in furnishings, foods, clothing, and hospitality patterns are not great on an absolute scale, but the small differences have, on the local scale, as much significance to the people of Vasilika as the corresponding differences do in any middle-class suburb in the United States. Family self-respect is maintained, and family rivalries are carried on in the village partly by demonstrating levels of taste through consumption habits.

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369 What the villagers admire and try to emulate are standards of living and of taste as they perceive them to exist in the towns and cities. Their knowledge of these standards is acquired through the first-hand information brought back by their town relatives and by what they themselves notice on their own visits to urban centers.

The base to which the new standards are adapted, or for which they are substituted, is a set of patterns for rural living customary in the Boeotian countryside.

Inside Vasilika's Homes

Let us first consider the house. A new two-story house has the greatest prestige, but any family that builds a new house, even if it is only the small one-room brick house, gains some standing in the eyes of the villagers, although mild ridicule of the insignificant efforts of people of low prestige is not unknown in the village. 511 342 [556]

In the two-story houses, old or new, the ground floor typically consists of two rooms, one of which has cement flooring, with stuccoed walls and a fireplace. Many families use this room for all purposes: as kitchen, living room, and as the bedroom for all the members of the family. The women cook in the small fireplace, always conserving precious wood, the annual supply of which is usually purchased in October. They place two thin logs in the form of a V so that only the point at which the logs meet actually burns. [354]

The only characteristic of the room which qualifies it as a kitchen is a wide window ledge, hollowed out to the depth of two inches, and lined with cement. The shallow basin slopes toward the window with a short length of metal tubing pushed through the outer wall of the house. A small water container with a spigot at the bottom is hung on a side wall above the shallow cement-lined basin, and the kitchen appointments are complete. Waste water drains through the tubing out into the yard of the house. The villagers often hang some towels near the basin and wash their hands and faces there each morning. The women of Vasilika used to agitate for the construction of a sink, both because it was a sign of progress and because it would ease some of their work. In 1961 they were eagerly awaiting the piping of water into the houses. 342 511 414 [515]

The lower floor all-purpose room is furnished with a few straight wooden chairs with cane seats, and may also have a table and a bed. Proper beds are not essential, however, because thin pallets can be brought out at night and placed on boards resting on wooden saw horses to create a bed, or may be merely laid out on the floor. The women pile the bedding, including folded pallets, sheets, and blankets, neatly in one corner of the room and cover the pile with a white rectangular cloth bedding-cover especially designed for the purpose. 352 511 [353]

The second lower room has an earthen floor and may be used for storing household supplies, wine-barrels, and agricultural produce. Among the less prosperous families, the lower floor may consist of only one earthen-floored room in which a curtain hanging near one end separates the living section from the storage area. 342 511 [353]

The upper story, apart from the terrace, may have several rooms with wooden plank floors and stucco walls. A second fireplace, sharing a flue with the lower one, may become the focus of what the villagers call the winter room. It is a smaller version of the all-purpose room below. [354]

The remaining second-floor room is called the *saloni*, and is best designated in English as "the front parlor." It is the ceremonial room of the house, the part in which the family represents itself to the outside world. Visitors are 574 [574]

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291 schoolgirls. Since the same clothing is usually worn indoors and out during the
511 winter, small boys and girls wear cotton pinafores over their outer coats in order
[286] to prevent too fast soiling. Some mothers knit sweaters for their children, but
gloves are not worn for warmth either by children or by adults. Uncomfortably
cold hands are expected throughout the winter, and during this season, as they
enter a house, people frequently walk directly to the front of the fire and extend
their hands towards the flame. Some of the young girls wear thin gloves, for
show rather than for warmth, when they go to church. Children, like their
parents, are now expected to have new clothes at Easter, and, if possible, for
other holidays as well. They must be neatly dressed for school. A few of
Vasilika's children wear torn, patched, faded clothing out of economic neces-
sity.

Urbanity vs. Convenience

369 The urban acquisitions relieve some of the work load and add to the
511 variety of life, and the villagers frequently express satisfaction at having the
312 new conveniences and the new relief from boredom. But convenience seems to
406 be welcomed less for its own sake than as a by-product of goods and practices
that are primarily valued for their air of urban sophistication, of "progress."
For example, most of the wells in the village have no windlasses to ease the labor
of bringing up the pails full of water. Women simply keep a rope attached to a
pail, lower the pail into the well, and use the rope to lift it out again, hand
over hand. The water level in many of the wells is low, so that drawing a pail
of water is hard physical labor which must be done at least twice a day, but the
women did not agitate for windlasses in the way they did for cement basins, for
obviously, windlasses have no urban cachet about them. They do want running
water in the homes—an urbanism—and it will, incidentally, relieve them of the
drudgery of drawing so much well-water, but for a generation, the presence of
a few windlasses in the village did not inspire other families to acquire them.

369 The overt recognition on the part of the villagers that they admire and
354 accept the new items because they stand for progress and sophistication and not
511 entirely for whatever utility they may have is exemplified by the comment of one
of Vasilika's less prosperous inhabitants whose living conditions were among
the least favorable in the village. His house did, in 1959, have electricity, how-
ever, and he had one naked bulb hanging in the center of his one small upstairs
room. This man described for us his feelings about a recent visit he had made to
the *paniyiri* of a mountain village which had no electricity. "I couldn't stay there
more than a day," he said. "They had no electric light, and I cannot live like
that any more. I have become a European," he concluded, with a smile, using
[829] the term that Greeks use for the inhabitants of Europe west of the Adriatic.
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369 A second reason for the acceptance of new uses for cash is simply the rivalry
511 among Vasilika's families. If one family with urban connections has something
new, other families make an effort to get the same thing. One of the effects of
● 556 the process is that some families whose incomes barely enable them to subsist

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sometimes use their meager cash resources on plastic tablecloths or new clothes, as a token of their participation in the battle for prestige.

One important characteristic of the changes in the villagers' consumption habits is that virtually all the substitutions and additions require the villagers to dip into their cash resources. In this respect, the new needs act as a spur to the cash crop economy of the settlement and provide motivation for more efficient farming. Increased efficiency in farming adds to income and it becomes possible to finance still more innovations. The extent to which this kind of interrelated process can continue is, of course, dependent on world markets for the villagers' produce, on the level of economic activity in the entire Greek nation, and, more specifically, on the extent to which the population no longer needed on the farms can be productively employed in the towns and cities. The inheritance and dowry system of Vasilika's residents is central to this matter and is the subject of the next chapter.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE DOWRY SYSTEM • 63

or in a regular pattern of circulation through several generations among particular sets of such groups. The control of property establishes social links between a man and his wife's relatives not only in the ways we have mentioned, but because his wife's parents and brothers and sisters have a legal and customary right to be consulted before the final alienation of dower property (Section 1418). These links last only one generation, however, so that in each generation a new network of relations between elementary families in the neighborhood develops, clustering around the management of dower properties. These matters are important because they reveal some of the economic and social structure of Vasilika and its neighborhood that is congruent with the type of relationships people, both kin and non-kin, have with each other (see Chapter 5).

One other situation occurs frequently enough in Vasilika to be worth mentioning. When a farmer has no sons to inherit his land and his house, but has a daughter, the father may acquire a man's assistance on the farm by importing a son-in-law. Such a man is called a *soghambros* in Vasilika; he is a husband who moves into his wife's household instead of vice-versa. The importation of a *soghambros* is also a solution to the problem of a young widow who has no grown sons to run the farm left by her husband and arranges a second marriage for herself with a man who is willing to work her first husband's holdings and her original dower lands. Since a *soghambros* is always a manager of, and the laborer on, property belonging to others and is expected to bring no property of his own with him, there is a slight social stigma attached to the status of Vasilika. The villagers say also that a *soghambros* is not "master in his own house." Certainly, the lot of a man who is not a master in his own house and comes as a stranger to a village where most of the other men have known each other all their lives is not a happy one. But a *soghambros* is not really dishonored by his position; the villagers, in this situation, as in so many others, recognize the practical necessities which brought about the arrangement and do not strongly condemn a man for making the best of his difficulties.

The dowry in Vasilika enters into the life of the villagers in other ways besides inheritance at marriage. It has long served as a means of upward social mobility for girls. Since, as we have seen, the marriage of a daughter is among the most important obligations of parents, the dowry comes into the consciousness of the villagers more often as a property requirement for marrying off their daughters than as a means of transmitting inheritance. When, in addition, the high value placed on upward social mobility is translated into an effort to find urban sons-in-law for one's daughters, the dowry emerges as a mechanism for increasing the social prestige of the family. Farmers are willing to give larger dowries in exchange for the great satisfaction they derive from having town sons-in-law. In Vasilika, the education of some sons has released land to add to the girls' dowries. Improved agricultural income has also enabled the farmers to give larger dowries. In the decade ending in 1959, every marriage of a Vasilika daughter whose father was in the upper half of the village's income range had been one with a man of respectable occupation who lived in a provincial town or in Athens. The husbands are tailors, small retail store-owners, or civil service workers. One young man is a photographer, another is a gymnasium

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professor who has become the principal of his gymnasium. In 1961, however, the son of a rather prosperous village farmer became attracted to a daughter of another Vasilika farmer with good land holdings. The young man asked his father to arrange the marriage for him, and, since all the conditions were entirely suitable, the young couple were engaged.

The trend in favor of town husbands prevails, however, among most of those who can afford it. Once a few girls had married urban men, the rivalry between village families led to greater efforts to secure town husbands for the others. Consequently, there has been an inflation in dowries which is alarming the villagers themselves. In the early 1950's, a *prika* worth \$3,000 was enough for a town husband of no special prestige; by the late 1950's, the same kind of man was asking for one worth \$4,500.

The inflation has had several consequences. Often the value of the dowry can no longer be limited to the share of the inheritance to which a girl is entitled. Farming sons are willing to give up some portion of their shares so that their sisters can "live well," as they put it. The brothers gain also from the added prestige and influence of the family. These in turn may make it possible for them to find a girl with a larger dowry than their property qualifications might warrant. A farmer so situated may make higher demands on the ground that his and his wife's children will have an urban aunt and uncle. The town sister might provide board for her nephews and nieces (girls are increasingly being sent to gymnasium) while they are in school and can also be expected to help them find jobs.

Another consequence of the dowry inflation is the increasingly late age of marriage for the village girls and the town men. It takes farmers longer to accumulate the larger amounts of cash for the dowry, and the prospective grooms longer to attain a position or income at least partially commensurate. Vasilika's girls who marry town men are usually between twenty-five and thirty. Those whose fathers have few land holdings, and consequently can offer only small dowries, have been marrying farmers from other villages or within Vasilika itself and have been in their early twenties at the time of the engagement.

Now let us consider the disposition of the dowry which goes with a girl marrying a town husband. First, if he accepts land as part of the dowry, he will of necessity have it worked by his wife's male relatives. In time, however, often by the end of the first decade of the marriage, the son-in-law may wish to expand his shop, or may wish to start building a house for himself or for his daughter's dowry, or may hear of a good investment opportunity. He will want money for these purposes, and so he begins, with his wife's consent and after consultation with her father, to arrange for the sale of dowry lands. Since the 1950's, prospective town grooms have been less willing to take land which they know they will eventually want to sell, and have been asking for cash or for a house in town. Anticipating this situation, several of Vasilika's farmers who have small daughters have begun to use their savings and even to sell a little land in order to build houses in Athens or in a provincial town so that by the time their daughters are ready to marry, the houses will provide the main portion of the dowry.

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[Villages of the Plains]

THE VILLAGES

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While I did not come to know the village well enough to be sure, my impression was that the decisive break-through in 1952 was not a matter of new knowledge or information so much as a change in financial attitudes. That is to say, before 1952 the peasants of Lofiscos looked upon indebtedness with horror. Anyone who went to a bank and of his own free will incurred a debt was, they felt, courting disaster. This was not far from the case in the 1920's and early 1930's when agricultural prices were uncertain, bank interest high, and foreclosure a possibility. In 1956 bank interest was still high — between 7 and 8 per cent for loans to individual farmers — but the price of wheat was fixed ahead of time by the government, and the price of fertilizer had been lowered by government subsidy. As a result, a simple computation could assure the borrower of what he stood to gain. This was what the farmers of Lofiscos learned in 1952. They allowed the Bank's representative to convince them that there were times and circumstances when borrowing was not the first step to perdition, but a sure (or nearly sure) way to greater income.

Farming in Lofiscos has always, for as long as men can recall, been mainly directed at market sale. Wheat from the village has gone to Volos or Larissa year after year, and, since 1920 at least, the peasants have been able to buy town products as they wanted them. But in general they have preferred hoarding to spending. In Turkish times, to build a comfortable new house or to dress elaborately would simply have attracted the attention of some hungry tax or rent collector; hence there was a strong motive for concealing behind an unpretentious, indeed poor-seeming, exterior any wealth that might accumulate. This attitude apparently survived under Greek administration, even after the peasants of the village ceased to owe rents to a landlord and secured the whole harvest as their own. It still lingers: hence the shabby appearance of the village and its inhabitants.

If the first important break with old traditional patterns of

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621 break down. The more elaborate social stratification and intricate economic integration which the development from simple village into small town involves carries with it a special vulnerability: vulnerability to fluctuations in distant markets, and vulnerability to social stresses within the community itself. This is perhaps the price Old Corinth has to pay for its remarkable economic progress in recent years.

x 178 This progress may remind us that there is another sense in which the social structure of Old Corinth shows itself far more flexible and hospitable to innovation than the other villages described. For while family and marriage customs have not undergone important modification, the occupational patterns of the community have shown important changes; and in at least one instance a landless and once very poor man has risen to a position of wealth and importance by becoming a successful merchant. Old Corinth has given far more scope to individual and cooperative enterprise than either Lofiscos or Nea Eleftherohori. Yet this development, too, is in line with old Greek tradition. The self-made man, particularly the self-made merchant or storekeeper, rising to wealth and respectability by virtue of his mother wit and shrewdness in buying and selling, has been a prominent figure in Greek society for at least two centuries; and it has always been the marginal man in the village social hierarchy – the man who has had no land to keep him busy – who has naturally gravitated to such occupations when opportunity has opened. Innovation in Old Corinth has thus taken traditional forms.

x 178 Since 1912, rural Greece has been fundamentally divided between villages like Old Corinth, which can look back to generations of substantially undisturbed evolution, and those villages where within recent memory radical governmental intervention entirely transformed earlier landholding patterns. The division is geographical. In Old Greece, meaning Greece within the

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957

EH1 Greece EH1
Kardamili

[Hill Villages]

THE VILLAGES

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They came back to a village whose earlier means of livelihood was being undermined by new roads. As this fact became clear, emigration from the village commenced. Altogether, something like two hundred persons left the village between 1950 and 1956. Only one family went overseas, to Australia. The rest went either to Kalamata or to Athens. Among those who have remained in the village, a considerable number have undertaken seasonal migration to the Messenian plain in order to seek work with which to supplement the meager income from their olive trees in the village. The biggest single source of employment which has opened up in recent years is work in rice fields, developed in former salt marshes on the very edge of the Messenian plain. For the villagers of Kardamili these fields in Messenia have meant work and wages. Between eighty and ninety persons, both men and women, leave the village each year to help cultivate the rice fields. While working, they live in shanties or even out of doors, and return to their homes in Kardamili when work stops, or when something needs to be done on their own land.

Within the village there are variations in wealth, but no family has so much land as to need to hire labor. Indeed, the village secretary told me that the richest man in the village has only forty days' work a year on his olive trees, while nearly one third of all the village families own no land at all.

The only change that has come to the traditional agriculture of the community is the introduction of fertilizer, but few families use it. A common opinion holds that fertilizer is bad for the olive trees, and makes them short-lived by forcing an unnatural proliferation of fruit. A more sophisticated farmer told me that while the size of the fruit is increased by fertilizer, the quantity of oil is not increased in anything like the same proportion and its quality is lowered. Since the olive trees of this part of Greece are famous for the high quality of the oil they produce, which

805 person is also just arriving, or, if they find him gone, they usually accept the fact with neither apology nor frustration.

STANDARD OF LIVING

511 The standard of living is set, not by a scheme, but by the needs of the person, shaped and channelled by family role, as well as by
 [177] disdain for softness and love of simplicity. Greeks do not budget, except for a very few who like to follow American ways. They spend not according to what they have, but according to the order of what
 [597] they want, and, on principle, they should want little. Simplicity and frugality are expressions of fortitude and self-discipline, and they are also really enjoyed as dimensions of living. Greeks are not motivated by the thought of great or vague or schematic future benefits; however, since the family is central to all planning, and since it extends into the future, Greeks try to see to it that there are means for the education of the son or the dowry of the daughter, or for an added field or a gold ornament for the wife. They have no faith in the future, and know that it will not take care of itself. So, as a rule, they buy only what they can pay for now and will not expand either business or standard of living on the basis of future profits.

[426] Greeks go in debt for subsistence and what they consider necessities. They do not like to borrow for luxuries, or for the creation of wealth. If they have enough for necessities, then any rise in income is sheer surplus. It does not have to go towards relieving the strain on the budget, or to pay a dreaded instalment on a radio, and, as a rule, it does not raise the standard of living. The Greek likes his life;
 [262] he does not see why he should give up his lunch of cheese and bread, or his delicious *commatiasta* (stews) just because now he can afford roast lamb every day. Such things belong to festive occasions. The surplus will be put back into the business, or saved intact for the family, or given in beneficence.

511 The wealthy Greek "of good family", that is, who has been properly
 556 brought up, is not distinguished by luxurious living, since luxury is
 457 soft and ostentatious. He is distinguished by his gifts to his country or village, by the battleship or stadium that bears his name, the village fountain or health centre which he established for his district. Large sums of money are sent annually to Greece by its emigrated sons for these purposes, as well as for the support or education or dowering of relatives, by people whose wives do their own housework. Greece has counted on these sums as an important source of income, and the economy of Greece now suffers from the effects of restricted emigration, since American-born Greeks lose contact with their parents' country, and fewer such sums are now being sent back.